

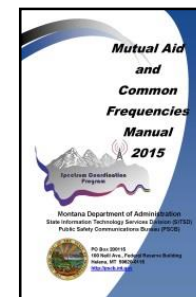


FACTSHEET: Mutual Aid Frequencies for Law Enforcement



Introduction: Montana's law enforcement officers rely heavily on two-way Land Mobile Radios (LMR) for day-to-day and emergency communications. Radio frequencies are an essential—but limited—resource for LMR communications. The State of Montana holds statewide licenses with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for more than 20 mutual aid frequencies. These licenses are held to allow other eligible public safety users access to these shared frequencies. Mutual aid frequencies can enhance your communications and help ensure an effective public-safety response. It is essential, however, that responders communicate using Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) outlined for Montana's mutual aid frequencies. This factsheet outlines a few key SOPs and policies for the use of Montana's mutual aid radio frequencies for members of law enforcement.

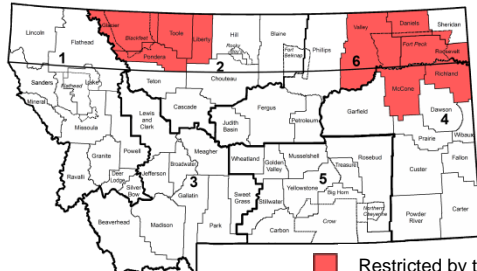
Authorization to Use Mutual Aid Frequencies: Law enforcement and other public safety entities must have a valid permit from Montana's Dept. of Administration (DOA) giving them permission to use specific mutual aid frequencies. BEFORE mutual aid frequencies are programmed in your radios or base stations, you should have a permit. Fortunately, applying for one is easy. Simply visit this site, <https://app.mt.gov/mutualaid/>, and follow the three steps. Permits are issued electronically and are valid for five years. All users are subject to FCC regulations and SOPs as outlined in the *Mutual Aid and Common Frequency Manual*, 2015 Edition. The latest version of the Manual is available at this website: <http://sitsd.mt.gov/mutualaid.aspx>. All VHF mutual aid frequencies are narrowband.



Law Enforcement and General Use Mutual Aid Frequencies and Usage: The Montana law enforcement mutual aid frequencies are established for emergency, tactical and administrative communications. Three law enforcement mutual aid frequencies are listed in the table below along with the Border Interoperability Channel and three General Use frequencies—**GOLD**, **TAN** and **NEON**. The color designations presented here are used as a simple naming convention in place of the actual frequency or descriptive name. However, agencies are now being encouraged to use both the color name and the National Interoperability Designator (**VFIRE**, **VLAW**, **VMED**).

Montana Mutual Aid Law Enforcement and General Use Frequencies

Frequency (MHz)	Color Name & National Designator	Usage/Restrictions/Notes
Emergency Communications		
155.4750	BLUE (VLAW31)	National Law Enforcement Emergency Primary channel for law enforcement inter-agency emergency communications.
		Border Interoperability Channel <ul style="list-style-type: none">Uses the 155.4750 MHz law enforcement frequency as a common resource for border incidents in Alberta, British Columbia, Montana and Saskatchewan.For all law enforcement, fire, EMS and public safety agencies including local, state, tribal, federal and Canadian users within 16 km (10 mi) of the US-Canadian border.
Tactical Communications		
153.8000	BLACK	Law Enforcement Tactical <ul style="list-style-type: none">Established exclusively for law enforcement tactical team operations.Approved digital and encrypted use with regional SOP.Not to be used within 75 mils of the BLAIRMORE, HILLCREST & WARNER, ALBERTA areas per FCC license.
Administrative Communications		
155.7900	SILVER	Law Enforcement Mutual Aid <ul style="list-style-type: none">Primary channel for law enforcement inter-agency administrative communications.Used for dispatch-to-dispatch communications and tactical operations.
General Use Frequencies		
153.9050	GOLD	General Mutual Aid and Coordination <ul style="list-style-type: none">Available to all Montana public safety and emergency responders.Designated for inter-discipline communications.Used for both emergency and administrative (non-emergency) traffic; however, administrative traffic can be preempted by a higher priority need.

Frequency (MHz)	Color Name & National Designator	Usage/Restrictions/Notes	Frequency (MHz)	Color Name & National Designator	Usage/Restrictions/Notes
155.3400	TAN (VMED28)	<p>Primary Use: State Air-to-Ground Coordination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For use by rotary or fixed wing aircraft to communicate with ground response units at emergency scenes. Its use includes landing assistance and emergency coordination. <p>Secondary Uses: EMS communications and medical staging at an incident scene.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For Hospital-to-Hospital and Hospital-to-Ambulance communications or for EMS interagency communications at an incident scene. <p>Note: All airborne use of this frequency is restricted to below 5280 feet and 10-watt ERP.</p>	157.4250	NEON	<p>Primary Use: General Mutual Aid and Coordination Secondary Use: EMS Priority during Mass-Casualty Incidents. For communications within the Triage Group of the Medical Branch per SOP.</p> <p>Restrictions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40-Watt mobile limit Not available within 120 Km of Coumts, AB including the following jurisdictions: Blackfeet Reservation and Glacier, Liberty, Pondera and Toole Counties. Not available in: Daniels, McCone, Richland, Roosevelt and Valley Counties or on the Fort Peck Reservation due to co-channel use.
<p>NEON Restriction Map</p>  <p>Restricted by the FCC and existing use.</p>					

All mutual aid frequencies should use CTCSS tone control of 156.7 Hz on the transmit side.

Encryption



In general, the use of any mutual aid channel for transmission of any encoded, encrypted, digital, or scrambled message is prohibited. One of two exceptions, however, is with the **BLACK** channel where encryption may be utilized in accordance with law enforcement communication plans. At times, sensitive radio transmissions need to be protected when disclosure of the information could adversely impact public safety operations and/or pose a threat to first responders or members of the public.

Frequency Monitoring



Users of any mutual aid frequency are required to monitor the frequency prior to transmitting to detect higher priority traffic. When need be, an "EMERGENCY TRAFFIC" interruption or "EMERGENCY TRAFFIC ONLY" broadcast may be made. Agencies with **BLUE (VLAW31)** base stations installed must monitor the frequency at all times when their facility is operational. A separate receiver for this frequency is encouraged to prevent other traffic or transmissions from covering its reception. Mobile monitoring of the channel at all times by all users is encouraged as well.

Permissible Uses of Law Enforcement/General Use Mutual Aid Frequencies

This table presents three usage classes with their permissibility—all communications are considered two-way.

Channel Name	Base - Mobile	Base - Base	Mobile - Mobile	Channel Name	Base - Mobile	Base - Base	Mobile - Mobile
BLUE (VLAW31)	YES	NO	YES	BLACK	NO	NO	YES
SILVER	YES (Secondary)	YES	YES (Secondary)	NEON	NO	NO	YES